

# MDCR/MCRC E-newsletter

**May 30, 2012**

## **Wells Fargo resolves discriminatory lending suit**

From Thompson Reuters, 5/30/12

[http://newsandinsight.thomsonreuters.com/Legal/News/2012/05 - May/Wells\\_Fargo\\_resolves\\_discriminatory\\_lending\\_suit/](http://newsandinsight.thomsonreuters.com/Legal/News/2012/05 - May/Wells_Fargo_resolves_discriminatory_lending_suit/)

May 29 (Reuters) - Wells Fargo & Co is setting a \$425 million lending goal and paying \$7.5 million to end a lawsuit accusing the bank of discriminatory lending practices in Memphis, Tennessee.

## **Disability Network executive: Flint has worked at making polling places more accessible**

From MLive, 5/28/12

[http://www.mlive.com/news/flint/index.ssf/2012/05/disability\\_network\\_executive\\_f.html](http://www.mlive.com/news/flint/index.ssf/2012/05/disability_network_executive_f.html)

FLINT, MI -- The president of The Disability Network and the Michigan Civil Rights Commission says the city of Flint hasn't neglected its duty to make polling places accessible to people with disabilities.

## **Lansing celebrates Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month at Capitol**

From the State News (MSU), 5/23/12

[http://www.statenews.com/index.php/article/2012/05/lansing\\_celebrates\\_asian\\_american\\_and\\_pacific\\_islander\\_heritage\\_month\\_at\\_capitol](http://www.statenews.com/index.php/article/2012/05/lansing_celebrates_asian_american_and_pacific_islander_heritage_month_at_capitol)

Children dancing and shaking green masks at a large group of people might not be a typical scene in the rotunda of the Capitol building in Lansing, but the crowd could not keep from smiling as the Post Oak Elementary School students displayed a Chinese dance at the Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month program yesterday.

## **Gay rights supporters outnumber opponents in comments at hearing in Jackson**

From MLive, 5/22/12

[http://www.mlive.com/news/jackson/index.ssf/2012/05/gay\\_rights\\_hearing\\_being\\_held.html](http://www.mlive.com/news/jackson/index.ssf/2012/05/gay_rights_hearing_being_held.html)

JACKSON, MI -- Shelly Milligan of Rives Township cried as she spoke about the suggestion that she chose to be a lesbian.

## **Man Discriminated Against, Awarded \$340,000**

From MIRS, 5/22/12 (no link available)

The Michigan Civil Rights Commission (CRC) today awarded a man who was routinely discriminated against in the workplace for his Arab decent \$342,525, a significant decrease from his \$1.3 million claim.

The commission had decided earlier that the SMART bus company was culpable for discrimination in *Barash v. Smart*, but hadn't awarded monetary damages until today (See "State Finds SMART Violated Civil Rights Act," 10/13/2011).

Complainant Mazyn BARASH was being harassed with threatening phone calls and "outrageous conduct" by co-worker Rodney BOLTON, who called Barash a "raghead," who likes to "f\*\*\* camels." Barash also was called a "Saddam lover" and told by Bolton that he wished he could "kill all Iraqis," among other examples of harassment.

The CRC determined that they wouldn't award any money for wrongful termination, which was not part of the suit, but that it would go after SMART for discrimination.

"Wrongful termination of Mr. Barash was never part of his case," argued SMART Attorney Heidi HUDSON, who pointed to several portions of the 2,700 page legal transcript where Barash declined to press those types of charges.

"Keep in mind a simple question, which is will this create a chilling effect for the next litigant?" Akeel told the Commission.

He pointed out that it's been eight years since Barash filed his initial complaint, and that his main accuser was not punished by SMART until he made threats on President Barack OBAMA's life.

"We're a little disappointed with the result," said Barash attorney Shereef AKEEL.

The CRC unanimously knocked down the dollar value of Barash's pain and suffering by \$50,000. In total they awarded \$150,000 for pain and suffering, \$68,016 for lost wages in the time when he was still employed by SMART but not working and \$124,509 in attorney fees.

"While a very personal part of me feels as if the case was extreme. . . I have to on the local side consider the charges," said Commission Vice Chair Lisa PEEPLES-HURST.

Akeel said that Barash could seek recourse in Circuit Court, but had not decided at this time whether or not to do that.

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#### CRC Says Sign Language Students Should Practice

The Michigan Civil Rights Commission voted unanimously today to issue an interpretive statement on 2007 changes to the state law on deaf persons interpreters, which has inadvertently halted the education of new interpreters.

The problem, said Department of Civil Rights (MDCR) Legislative Liaison Dan LEVY, is that a provision in the Deaf Persons' Interpreters Act prohibits a non-qualified interpreter from providing sign language interpreting services. This was interpreted to mean students couldn't practice in real settings, and subsequently universities educating interpreters couldn't seek accreditation.

The commission today unanimously approved an interpretive statement that clarifies that student interpreters can gain practice in clinical experiences as part of their training program when working with a qualified interpreter.

Levy said that a change in legislation wasn't off the table, but this interpretive statement was important in the meantime.

"Legislative change is never quick and never guaranteed, and certainly hasn't happened yet," said Levy.

But this measure could be trumped by contrary legislation or an opinion from the Attorney General.

Commission Chair Michael ZELLEY said that this would also benefit the deaf community by providing more well-educated interpreters in the future.

### **Gay rights hearing in Jackson will be covered live on MLive.com**

From MLive, 5/20/12

[http://www.mlive.com/news/jackson/index.ssf/2012/05/gay\\_rights\\_hearing\\_in\\_jackson.html](http://www.mlive.com/news/jackson/index.ssf/2012/05/gay_rights_hearing_in_jackson.html)

JACKSON, MI -- A [Michigan Department of Civil Rights hearing](#) at Jackson City Hall on Monday to discuss the possibility of amending the state's civil rights law will be covered live on the Jackson Citizen Patriot's website on MLive.com.

### **Patriarch Rai in Detroit**

From the Arab American News, 5/18/12

<http://www.arabamericannews.com/news/index.php?mod=article&cat=Community&article=5611>

Maronite Patriarch Bechara Peter Rai pushed to form strong bonds between Muslims and Christians locally and abroad on nearly every stop he made during his historic visit to Southeast Michigan this week. In addition to visiting Maronite churches he made appearances at the American Muslim Center and the Islamic Center of America in Dearborn, the largest mosque in country, on Monday.

### **GVSU asks court to dismiss lawsuit over rules that banned guinea pig from student dorm room**

From MLive, 5/18/12

[http://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2012/05/gvsu\\_asks\\_court\\_to\\_dismiss\\_law.html](http://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2012/05/gvsu_asks_court_to_dismiss_law.html)

GRAND RAPIDS – Grand Valley State University has filed a motion to dismiss a lawsuit by a former student alleging the school violated federal guidelines when it did not allow her to keep a guinea pig in her dorm as an emotional support animal.

### **Metroparks police department accused of unfair hiring, promotion**

From the Detroit Free Press, 5/14/12

<http://www.freep.com/article/20120514/NEWS05/205140393/Metroparks-police-department-accused-of-unfair-hiring-promotion>

The park system that rings metro Detroit is embroiled in numerous legal battles over hiring and promotion practices that some law enforcement officers claim favor minority candidates over older white males.

### **Letters: Imagine if Detroit's Arab-owned businesses shut down**

From the Detroit Free Press, 5/14/12

<http://www.freep.com/article/20120512/OPINION04/205120324/Letters-Imagine-if-Detroit-s-Arab-owned-businesses-shut-down>

Perhaps the only way to make an impact on those who would shoot, kill, rob and effect mayhem on those vendors in our city would be for all businesses owned by Arabs to close for a day. Chaldeans, Arabs and other minorities provide the bulk of the infrastructure that sustains Detroiters on a daily basis -- from grocery stores, mom-and-pop shops, gas stations, repair and auto sales.

### **Guest Commentary: Stand-your-ground laws ignore racial bias realities**

From the Detroit Free Press, 5/10/12

<http://www.freep.com/article/20120510/OPINION05/205100443/Guest-commentary-Stand-your-ground-laws-ignore-racial-bias-realities?odyssey=mod|newswell|text|FRONTPAGE|s>

When a wave of frustration and outrage about the killing of Trayvon Martin crashed across North America, there is no doubt that countless Michigan residents were caught up in the tide of a public debate that began to ebb only after George Zimmerman, the admitted killer of the unarmed 17-year-old, was arrested. As opinions flew, some condemned Florida for its stand-your-ground law, unaware that Michigan has its own law that contains many of the features that have been the source of so much controversy in Florida.

### **Detroit group files civil rights complaint to protest transit cuts**

From the Detroit News, 5/9/12

<http://www.detroitnews.com/article/20120509/METRO01/205090450/1361/Detroit-group-files-civil-rights-complaint-to-protest-transit-cuts>

Detroit — A community group says it's filed a civil rights complaint against the Detroit Department of Transportation in response to citywide transit cuts.

### **Group passes resolution at national conference in Detroit to help protect Jewish students**

From the Detroit Free Press, 5/8/12

<http://www.freep.com/article/20120508/NEWS05/205080426/Group-passes-resolution-at-national-conference-in-Detroit-to-help-protect-Jewish-students>

Concerned about increasing anti-Israel activity on some campuses, a Jewish-American umbrella group passed a resolution during its annual conference -- being held in Detroit this week -- that calls for Jewish organizations to help protect Jewish students at universities nationwide.

### **MSU graduation rates increase, race gap persists**

From the Lansing State Journal, 5/7/12

<http://www.lansingstatejournal.com/article/20120506/NEWS06/305060104/MSU-graduation-rates-increase-race-gap-persists?/>

No one said the series of racial incidents at Michigan State University last fall was anything out of the ordinary, not the shouted slurs, the racist scrawls on black students' doors, the graffiti in the residence halls.

### **Judge throws out ethnic intimidation charges in alleged West Bloomfield attack**

From the Detroit Free Press, 5/3/12

<http://www.freep.com/article/20120503/NEWS03/120503033/West-Bloomfield-ethnic-intimidation?odyssey=mod|newswell|text|FRONTPAGE|s>

A judge this morning tossed out felony ethnic intimidation charges against three West Bloomfield men accused of attacking a black man and hurling racial slurs, but let stand misdemeanor aggravated assault charges.

### **Consumers Energy appeals loss in sexual harassment case**

From the Detroit News, 5/3/12

<http://www.detroitnews.com/article/20120503/BIZ/205030414/1409/metro/Consumers-Energy-appeals-loss-sexual-harassment-case>

Consumers Energy is appealing a \$300,000 verdict and thousands more in legal fees after a woman won a sexual harassment lawsuit.

### **Two Spirits focuses on identity in Native American Communities**

From the Tribal Observer, 5/1/12

<http://www.sagchip.org/tribalobserver/archive/2012-swf/050112-v23i04.htm>

On April 12, the Ziibiwing Cultural Center hosted a discussion and screening of the film Two Spirits. The movie coordinated with pride week at Central Michigan University (CMU).

### **Hamtramck High holds all girl prom**

From the New York Times, 5/1/12

[http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/02/us/hamtramck-high-holds-all-girl-prom.html?\\_r=1&emc=eta1](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/02/us/hamtramck-high-holds-all-girl-prom.html?_r=1&emc=eta1)

HAMTRAMCK, Mich. — The prom countdown was nearly complete, the do-it-yourself Greek columns, pink and white tulle bows and plastic flutes with the “Once Upon a Dream” logo awaiting the evening of evenings.

### **Christian group sues Allegan, Muslims over event**

From MLive, 4/30/12

[http://www.mlive.com/news/detroit/index.ssf/2012/04/christian\\_group\\_sues\\_allegan\\_m.html](http://www.mlive.com/news/detroit/index.ssf/2012/04/christian_group_sues_allegan_m.html)

DETROIT (AP) — A Christian legal advocacy group has claimed in a federal lawsuit that officials in a western Michigan city violated the rights of a self-proclaimed former terrorist by interrupting him during an event on free speech at a local high school.

### **Dominic Sheahan-Stahl Denied Michigan High School Keynote Speaker Role For Being Gay (VIDEO)**

From the Huffington Post, 4/26/12

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/04/26/dominic-sheahan-stahl-denied-being-graduation-speaker-for-being-gay\\_n\\_1456891.html?ref=detroit&ir=Detroit](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/04/26/dominic-sheahan-stahl-denied-being-graduation-speaker-for-being-gay_n_1456891.html?ref=detroit&ir=Detroit)



Dominic Sheahan-Stahl, a graduate of Sacred Heart Academy in Mount Pleasant, Mich., is speaking out after officials allegedly told his mother he wouldn't be allowed to speak at the high school's graduation because he was gay, Central Michigan Life reports.

### **Sexual harassment, discrimination were condoned at Jackson City Hall, lawsuit says**

From MLive, 4/26/12

[http://www.mlive.com/news/jackson/index.ssf/2012/04/former\\_jackson\\_city\\_official\\_s.html](http://www.mlive.com/news/jackson/index.ssf/2012/04/former_jackson_city_official_s.html)

JACKSON – A former city of Jackson official has sued the city, saying she was fired based on her gender and as retaliation for reporting that another employee was sexually harassed by the city's former personnel director.

### **A Power Team of Employee Activism**

From Between the Lines, 4/26/12

<http://www.pridesource.com/article.html?article=53004>

When one of the founders of Ford Globe met one of the founders of Chrysler's People of Diversity at an employee resource event in 1998, the wheels started turning on a relationship based on mutual love for each other and for activism.

### **Flint-area group announces plan for a Flint Civil Rights Museum**

From MLive, 4/26/12

[http://www.mlive.com/news/flint/index.ssf/2012/04/flint-area\\_group\\_announces\\_pla.html](http://www.mlive.com/news/flint/index.ssf/2012/04/flint-area_group_announces_pla.html)

FLINT, MI – The Flint Civil Rights Historical Museum Committee announced today plans for the creation of a Flint Civil Rights Museum.



**Only Fair Is Fair.**